

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-30

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R 251756Z JAN 74
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LIMA
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EXDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, PE, US, CI, UR
SUBJECT: PERUVIAN PURCHASE OF SOVIET TANKS

FOR AMBASSADOR

1. YOU SHOULD SEEK AN APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT VELASCO AT AN EARLY DATE TO DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT. EXACT TIMING IS LEFT TO YOUR DISCRETION IN LIGHT OF DEVELOPMENTS WITH RESPECT TO THE GREENE MISSION. YOU SHOULD MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

2. NOW THAT THE NEWS OF THE PERUVIAN PURCHASE OF SOVIET TANKS IS PUBLIC, YOU HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO SEEK AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE PRESIDENT TO CONVEY OUR REACTION. THESE COMMENTS ARE OFFERED IN FURTHERANCE OF THE FRIENDLY BUT CANDID DIALOGUE WHICH WE BELIEVE SHOULD CHARACTERIZE U.S.-PERUVIAN RELATIONS.

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3. WE DO NOT QUESTION PERU'S SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO BUY ARMS WHEREVER IT CHOOSES; BUT WE ARE CONCERNED AT THE ENTRY OF THE SOVIET UNION INTO THE LATIN AMERICAN ARMS MARKET. PRIOR TO THIS SALE, THE ONLY COUNTRY IN THE HEMISPHERE TO OBTAIN

SIGNIFICANT SOVIET ARMS WAS CUBA, A COMMUNIST COUNTRY DEPENDENT ON THE SOVIET UNION. SOVIET ARMS SALES IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD HAVE AT TIMES PROVED SERIOUSLY DESTABILIZING. SOME COUNTRIES HAVE FOUND THAT AN ARMS

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION ULTIMATELY PRODUCED UNFORESEEN AND UNDESIRABLE EFFECTS, INCLUDING ARMS RACES AND STRAINED RELATIONS WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS, AS WELL AS SOVIET INTERFERENCE IN THEIR INTERNAL AFFAIRS. THE PRESIDENT WILL AGREE THAT THE SOVIET INTEREST IN ARMS SALES HAS NOT NORMALLY BEEN EXCLUSIVELY COMMERCIAL IN NATURE.

4. THE USG HAS EVERY CONFIDENCE THAT THE GOP WILL THWART ANY SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO MEDDLE IN PERU, BUT WE DO FEAR THAT THE SALE ITSELF WILL PRODUCE A DESTABILIZING EFFECT IN THE AREA. THERE ARE REPORTS MAKING THE ROUNDS THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF TANKS IS INVOLVED. PERU'S NEIGHBORS MIGHT REACT BY SEEKING INCREASED ARMAMENTS, AND AN ARMS RACE COULD ENSUE. CONTRARY TO ALARMIST RUMORS AND SOME PUBLIC STATEMENTS IN LIMA, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO US THAT ANY ONE OF PERU'S NEIGHBORS HAS SO FAR ENGAGED IN A BUILD-UP OF MILITARY HARDWARE THAT COULD BE CONSIDERED INORDINATE OR THREATENING. THE INTRODUCTION INTO PERU OF SOVIET OR CUBAN MILITARY TECHNICIANS ON ANY SIGNIFICANT SCALE WOULD BE AN ADDITIONAL DESTABILIZING FACTOR OF CONSIDERABLE PROPORTIONS. WE KNOW THE GOP DOES NOT, IN FACT, WANT AN ARMS RACE OR ANY OTHER FORM OF INSTABILITY IN THE AREA. THE PRESIDENT'S OWN RECENT STATEMENTS THAT PERU PREFERS TO SPEND ITS MONEY FOR DEVELOPMENT RATHER THAN ARMS, AS WELL AS HIS SUGGESTION OF A MEETING WITH BORDERING STATES TO FREEZE ARMS PROCUREMENT, ARE PARTICULARLY WELCOME IN THAT REGARD.

5. WE RECOGNIZE THAT OUR LEGISLATIVE AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS HAVE IN THE PAST FRUSTRATED PERUVIAN ATTEMPTS TO SATISFY THEIR ARMS REQUIREMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES.

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HOWEVER, THE PRESIDENT WILL REALIZE THAT A REAL EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO CORRECT THIS SITUATION TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE. PRESIDENT NIXON TOOK AN IMPORTANT STEP IN THAT DIRECTION IN MAY BY DETERMINING THAT SALES TO PERU COULD BE RESUMED UNDER THE FOREIGN MILITARY SALES ACT. OUR DESIRE HAS BEEN TO BE RESPONSIVE TO PERU'S LEGITIMATE NEEDS, AND OUR DISAPPOINTMENT OVER THIS PURCHASE FROM THE SOVIETS IS, THEREFORE, PARTICULARLY ACUTE. REGRETTABLY, IT IS LIKELY TO MAKE A SATISFACTORY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN US IN THE ARMS FIELD MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE.

6. WE MUST ALSO BE CONCERNED BY THE EFFECT OF THIS TRANSACTION ON CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC OPINION IN THE U.S.

AS THE PRESIDENT IS AWARE, SOME MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND SOME SECTORS OF OUR PUBLIC OPINION ARE ALREADY INCLINED TO TAKE AN UNSYMPATHETIC VIEW OF CERTAIN GOP POLICIES. THIS PURCHASE, PARTICULARLY IF IT IS FOLLOWED BY OTHER

ACQUISITIONS OF SOVIET ARMS, COULD PRODUCE SUCH AN ADVERSE IMPACT AS TO COMPLICATE OUR EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND PERU.

7. THE USG HAS MADE EVIDENT ITS DESIRE FOR A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN THOSE RELATIONS. WE ARE HIGHLY GRATIFIED BY THE PROGRESS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH MR. GREENE. WE LOOK FORWARD TO AN EQUITABLE SETTLEMENT OF THE OUTSTANDING INVESTMENT DISPUTES AND TO THE REMOVAL OF THE IRRITATIONS AND IMPEDIMENTS THESE HAVE PRODUCED. IT IS ALSO OUR HOPE THAT PROGRESS CAN BE MADE THROUGH QUIET NEGOTIATIONS TOWARD AN INTERIM SOLUTION TO THE FISHERIES DISPUTE. THE USG TRUSTS THAT THE GOP DECISION TO PURCHASE SOVIET TANKS DOES NOT SIGNIFY A LESSENING OF PERUVIAN INTEREST IN IMPROVED RELATIONS NOR AN INTENTION TO ENTER INTO A CONTINUING ARMS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

8. BEGIN FYI. DEPARTMENT ASSUMES THAT VELASCO'S REACTIONS TO THE FOREGOING WILL GIVE US SOME INDICATION OF GOP INTENTIONS IN THIS FIELD. WE HAVE DELIBERATELY OMITTED ANY SPECIFIC MENTION OF CHILE, BUT HAVE LITTLE DOUBT THAT VELASCO WILL KNOW WHAT TROUBLES US IN STRESSING THE DANGER OF A

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